

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

During the review of the LAFCO Proposal, the Zone 8 Proposal and the County Fire Enhancement Program, the Affected Agencies and County staff identified several critical elements that should be considered to ensure a successful reorganization. This section summarizes those elements.

Existing Standards of Cover

Standards of Cover are generally based on travel times in accordance with the County's General Plan. Current travel times in the unincorporated area exist at the 5, 10 and 20 minute mark to travel to the scene of an emergency based on minimum lot size. The more remote areas of the county with less population density, larger minimum lot sizes and fewer improvements are planned to be within the 20 minute travel time criteria. Most of the areas in the underserved areas under contract with volunteer fire departments are within the 20 minute travel time criteria. The current response by volunteer fire agencies includes the understanding that volunteers that drive or staff apparatus must first respond to the fire station from home or work and only then respond to the emergency with the appropriate fire apparatus. In the few volunteer fire stations with reserve firefighter capabilities, the travel time to the station is eliminated, allowing reserve firefighters staying at volunteer fire stations to respond like career firefighters. Volunteer firefighters are generally trained to the Emergency Medical Technician level.

The inclusion of CAL FIRE Amador Fire Stations in the County Fire Enhancement Program utilizes existing fire stations with career personnel staffing to augment and respond jointly with volunteer fire companies. This integrated response allows structural apparatus to be provided by the volunteer company, while three career/seasonal personnel with a CAL FIRE engine respond to the fire or EMS emergency to provide an automatic depth to all emergencies and a two engine response. The Amador Agreement, through an operational agreement/plan, also requires that CAL FIRE provide a replacement engine to the contracted Amador stations, if or when the CAL FIRE engine will be committed to an emergency and be unavailable for more than 45 minutes. This decision is predicated upon the CAL FIRE engine company officer or chief officer determining during the size-up or initial response what timeline is required to abate an emergency. This is a standard practice utilized by any fire department, regardless of jurisdiction. CAL FIRE trains employees to the EMT or First Responder level with the EMT replacing or having replaced the older standard approved by the State Emergency Medical Services Agency (EMSA) Director.

A similar depth of response and higher level of staffing is accomplished through contracts provided by CAL FIRE with fire protection districts in Rural FPD and Pine Valley FPD. In these stations, CAL FIRE personnel are providing two career personnel with one reserve or volunteer at three designated stations. The location of these stations with personnel ready to respond to emergencies minimizes total response time and allows travel time to begin almost immediately. The combination of the three types of fire station staffing responses assures that a fire apparatus is responding to all emergencies when they occur. Fire apparatus and personnel from either volunteer or CAL FIRE facilities compliment each other and are important in improving fire service insurance ratings that dictate the availability of citizens to procure reasonable fire insurance policies.

Future Standards of Cover

The LAFCO Proposal sets the stage for improved Standards of Cover with a mix of career and volunteer firefighters at the ALS level of service with BLS service at a minimum. Travel times are targeted to be within the aforementioned standards with the assurance that there will always be an immediate response to an emergency. The LAFCO Proposal is geared to always have personnel at all affected fire stations ready to respond to any emergency, eliminating the travel to the fire station to retrieve the primary fire apparatus. Volunteer firefighters would continue to respond from home or work and retrieve secondary fire apparatus for emergency needs. Any alternative plan needs to assure that there is no degradation of service. The intent of the LAFCO Plan and any other option is to improve service where possible.

Partnerships with Outside Agencies

As previously mentioned, LAFCO was unable to include certain agencies by law in developing their proposal. These include the United States Forest Service (USFS), Cleveland National Forest (also part of the USFS) and the multiple Tribal Fire Agencies that are a vital part of the fire service in this county. Through involvement in both working groups, "Affected" and "Interested", representatives from the various agencies expressed an interest to participate in a unified fire response to the degree their agencies will allow.

- Tribal Fire Agencies have long been a member of the County Mutual Aid system. They often provide automatic aid or mutual aid (requested once at scene) to neighboring fire jurisdictions. These departments have varying types of fire apparatus, including structural and brush engines, ladder trucks and rescues/ambulances. Several Tribal Agencies have increased their EMS delivery to paramedic service and often provide back-up ambulance or medical coverage to neighboring fire agencies. It is this type of partnership through agreement, not by law, that the Tribal Fire Chiefs would like to see in place, allowing them to be more engaged on a daily basis for emergency response. This would not only include the routine medical aid or structure fire emergencies, but also incidents of all types with special emphasis on wild land Strike Team Assignments to support local, State and federal agencies when these emergencies occur.

Some Tribal Fire Agencies have state-of-the-art training facilities that they would like to offer to the fire service and the Fire Enhancement Program to standardize training and manage funds wisely. Historically, Tribal Fire Agencies have offered portions of their lands to conduct wild land fire training for all interested fire agencies in the county. They have also been very instrumental in providing funds for special resources and potentially will continue to partner in those endeavors, if they become a more recognized partner in the fire community.

- The United States Forest Service (USFS) would like to become more routinely engaged in daytime emergency response, as their rules and policies allow. In many cases, the USFS has daytime fire coverage in volunteer fire communities that can enhance the service delivery until volunteer fire companies arrive. Many USFS employees are Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) and have

necessary equipment and are able to respond to various medical aids or rescues.

- CAL FIRE is an existing Fire and EMS provider as described previously. They strategically placed stations and apparatus years ago within communities served by volunteer fire agencies and fire districts today. A unified dispatch with many volunteer agencies and districts and CAL FIRE response assures a depth of coverage for apparatus and personnel needs for various emergencies. The CAL FIRE engines are wild land engines, but they are quite capable of suppressing structural fires. The pumps on the new CAL FIRE engines are now being rated per the Insurance Services Office (ISO). Existing CAL FIRE engines are planned to be pump tested through the Fire Enhancement Program at a future date. It should be noted that most pumps meet ISO criteria, but the State did not pay for pump testing (relying on manufacturing specifications). The CAL FIRE engines carry self-contained breathing apparatus, mixed hose types and a ladder for structural fire suppression (albeit shorter than ISO standards). CAL FIRE employees are trained in structural fire protection routinely and have the proper CAL OSHA personal protective equipment to make entry into buildings engulfed with fire.

CAL FIRE employees are trained in emergency medical services treatment to the EMT level with historic training at the First Responder level, an equivalent to EMT with less ambulance time required by the State EMSA Director. CAL FIRE employees have the proper equipment for a medical emergency response. In two San Diego areas, they provide paramedic service response and one area transports via ambulance. The training and service availability of CAL FIRE personnel and apparatus have proven to be cost effective through the Amador Agreements and through minimal Schedule A contracts with competitive salaries to other career departments. It should be noted that in 1998, a LAFCO committee chaired by then Director Karl Bauer, identified that the County and fire protection districts should take more advantage of existing CAL FIRE stations through an Amador Agreement and where advantageous to local governments consider full service agreements.

- The San Diego County Sheriff's Aviation Division is also a very active partner in fire and rescue services. The officers in this division fly multiple aircraft on a daily need basis for rescues and fires, as well as routine law enforcement missions. The well trained pilots, who are deputies, fly two aircraft for immediate fire or rescue response from two airports: Gillespie Field and Fallbrook Airport.

The helicopter at Gillespie has a Sheriff-pilot and one CAL FIRE Fire Captain at all times on fire or rescue missions. During the period of time that CAL FIRE provides firefighters for peak fire month staffing, a CAL FIRE fly crew with firefighters and another fire captain are onboard for initial attack fire suppression. The crew is dropped at the scene of the incident and either hotspots fires with hand tools, supports helicopter drops from the ground or does both tasks. Generally the crew helicopter goes to Fallbrook Airport and the hoist equipped helicopter stays at Gillespie Airport. A Sheriff-pilot and a CAL FIRE Fire Captain and one or two hoist trained Cal Fire EMT's are also assigned to that helicopter to assist with rescue and fire missions. A helicopter support truck is also staffed to support the helicopters with fuel and oil during peak months. The helicopter

support truck is staffed year round by 3 120 day rehire deputy sheriffs. Cal Fire adds two Fire Apparatus Engineers to staff the truck when the Helitack crew is assigned. This allows the helicopters to land at the fire scene for fueling needs or stage for new assignments, eliminating needless flight time which saves funding. The helicopters are managed by the pilots and are rotated for mandated Federal Aviation Administration inspections to keep at least one helicopter in service at all times. The emphasis is to have both primary water dropping helicopters in service to a maximum degree. The goal is to have an aircraft in North San Diego County and South San Diego County available at all times.

All four of the agencies listed above are located within or near the rural unincorporated portions of the county. They have personnel, aircraft and apparatus that should be considered for Fire and EMS response to unify fire service response delivery in the areas being considered for enhancement by one of the programs evaluated in this report.

Emergency and Medical Dispatch

A recent element of the Amador Agreement is the provision to provide Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) services to existing agencies within the CAL FIRE emergency dispatch system. EMD requires that when a 911 medical emergency is received by the dispatch agency, the dispatcher receiving the call must remain on the phone line until field personnel arrive at the scene and assume command. EMD was discussed at three LAFCO hearings as being of critical importance. If CAL FIRE provided this service, then all dispatch centers in the county would have the same level of service. This required additional CAL FIRE personnel to provide this service and was not a cost determined on a per call basis. Eligible partners include those volunteer departments that are within or desire to participate in the CAL FIRE system. This service was a part of the County agreement for expanded dispatch service; therefore, there was no need for additional charges to be made for existing departments or new volunteer departments receiving or wanting to receive dispatch services through CAL FIRE.

Land Use and Ownership

It is often identified that fires occur in the rural eastern and northern portions of the county. It is less identified that over 66 percent of the land within San Diego County is not privately owned and is not subject to development (See Appendix Map). This public ownership includes the Cleveland National Forest, the California State Parks System, Tribal Reservations, County owned lands, military reservations and private conservatorships. This reduced amount of available land for new development directs people and the associated infrastructure for housing to be generally found in well identified communities. Zoning within those communities is usually identified to be smaller parcels in a main street community type area with larger parcels becoming predominant outside of where the community services such as retail and commercial uses exist.

If one looks at a map of the existing infrastructure (dwellings, commercial) throughout the unincorporated portion of the county and within the LAFCO Proposal, one would find most of the infrastructure within designated communities. There outlying areas in or near these communities, but community names generally identify the area people associate as their community. Generally, a series of various roads lead to or are defined

within these communities. Water service in the unincorporated area of LAFCO's Phase I Plan is generally on water tanks with wells, with some water service through a system existing in a few communities.

Where do Fire and EMS emergencies occur in the unincorporated area of LAFCO's Phase I Proposal? Generally speaking, Fire and EMS emergencies occur where the structures are or where the people are. Simply put, this is where the communities are. The alternative place that Fire or EMS emergencies occur are on the road systems that people use daily to get to work, school or recreational locations. The people in these cases are transient and emergency services are met today by volunteer personnel, fire district personnel, CAL FIRE Personnel, USFS Personnel or Tribal personnel that are located in the nearby communities. Travel time to meet these emergencies is critical for an effective Fire and EMS delivery system. Refer to Attachment map for the response time in the unincorporated county.

If one takes away all non-private land, generally called public lands, the land base that is in need of daily emergency response capabilities is smaller than one expected within the original studies for fire protection. There is still a sizeable land base in need of protection and options in this report can address the need for Fire and EMS delivery.

Accountability

Private and public funds have historically been assigned to rural fire agencies through various means. Private funding is obtained through fund raising activities like community dinners/breakfasts, bake sales and donations. Those dollars are spent as the volunteer organization deems appropriate. Public funding for fire station operations can be derived from property taxes (ad valorem), benefit fees, assessment, grants or County General Fund. The public funding must be spent for the good of the taxpayers within expectations and guidelines set forth by standard accounting practices. Standard accounting practices require that there be written documentation of expenditures and income that can withstand periodic audits. The purpose of periodic audits is to assure those paying into public funds and those allocating public funds, that funds are managed as expected and will meet all legal requirements under the law. The selected consolidation plan will need to meet all legal requirements and citizen expectations pertaining to public funds and accountability.

State and Federal OSHA

Safety is a major concern. Firefighters and emergency responders, regardless if they are career or volunteer, must be trained properly and respond within the limits of their training. Firefighters are required to have minimum training as volunteers and as career employees that address the fire emergency, as well as the EMS incident. Federal and State OSHA have minimum safety and training elements that must be complied with. Some of those standards include, but are not limited to the following:

- Use of required Personal Protective Clothing (PPE) for all fire and rescues
- Certification of standard training for volunteer, reserve & career personnel
- Proof and availability of training records for all personnel
- Proof of training for company officer, engine operator & other positions
- Proof of medical training to the appropriate level

- Use of approved Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA)
- Proper Fit Testing for SCBA use
- Appropriate medical evaluation to use SCBAs for job specifications

In the event of an accident, injury or fatality that volunteer or career personnel respond to or are involved with, there is a significant chance that either the State or Federal OSHA will open an investigation. It is also highly probable that in the event of the injury or death of a Federal Forest Service firefighter on any local or state government incident, the US Inspector General will investigate the incident independently of any other investigation. This investigation is conducted to assure that all personnel were trained properly and responded properly in the emergency management process. Failure to discover that proper training was given and emergency incident management procedures were followed could lead to criminal and civil prosecution by the federal government. Therefore, it is imperative that all personnel in response agencies under the selected consolidation plan must have the appropriate training to comply with the needs of the public and recognized training criteria.